

REMARKS

Claims 5-8, 18-20, 22-26, 28, 32, 33, 35, 36, and 38-40 are pending in this application. Applicants have amended Claims 5, 7, 18, 19, 22-25, 32, and 35 and present new Claim 40 for the Examiner's consideration. Claims 1-4, 9-17, 21, 27, 29-31, 34, and 37 are cancelled without prejudice. Applicants request consideration of this application in view of the following remarks.

Claims 5-8, 15-20, and 22-39 were rejected as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,736,982 to Suzuki et al. ("Suzuki"). The virtual space system of Suzuki includes a plurality of terminals that are connected to a server via a communication network. The terminals each send to the server the positions of the viewing point and direction of eyes of its user in the virtual space. Based on the positions and direction of eyes of the avatars of the other terminals received from the other terminals via the server, each terminal generates an avatar image in the specified direction and at the specified position and displays it in the visual field. The server receives the latest position information of the avatar from each terminal and, when the distance between two arbitrary avatars becomes smaller than a threshold value, connects speech channels of the two terminals corresponding to these avatars.

Suzuki further teaches that "each terminal sends at least the position information of the avatar of its user to the server 50 . . . [and] the server 50 . . . sends the processed position information to all the terminals". (See, for example, Col. 5, lines 1-6.) Thus, in Suzuki, the terminals each receive of all of the position information of the other users' avatars from the server.

Amended Claim 5 is directed to method for enabling a first user to interact with other users in a virtual space, wherein the first user and the other users each have an avatar and a client process associated therewith, and wherein each client process is in communication with a server process. Unlike Suzuki, the method includes the steps of receiving a position of less than all of

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the other users' avatars from the server process and determining, from the received positions, a set of the other users' avatars that are to be displayed to the first user. These steps are performed by the client process associated with the first user. Claim 5, and Claims 6-8 and 24, which depend therefrom, are patentable over Suzuki and the other references of record because they fail to teach or suggest such a method.

Amended Claim 18 is directed to a method for enabling a plurality of users to interact in a virtual space, wherein each user has a computer associated therewith, wherein each computer has a client process associated therewith, wherein each client process has an avatar associated therewith, and wherein each client process is in communication with a server process. The method includes the steps of monitoring, by each client process, a position of the avatar associated with the client process and transmitting, by each client process to the server process, the position of the avatar associated with the client process. Unlike Suzuki, the method also includes the step of transmitting, by the server process to each client process, the positions of less than all of the avatars that are not associated with the client process. The method also includes the step of determining from the positions transmitted in step (c), by each client process, a set of the avatars that are to be displayed. Claim 18, and Claims 19-20 which depend therefrom, are thus patentable over Suzuki and the other references of record because they fail to teach or suggest such a method.

Amended Claim 22 is directed to a method for operating a server to enable a plurality of users to interact in a virtual space, wherein each user has a computer associated therewith, wherein each computer has a client process associated therewith, wherein each client process has an avatar associated therewith, wherein the server has a process associated therewith, and wherein each client process is in communication with the server process. The method includes the step of receiving, from each client process by the server process, data indicating a position of

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the avatar associated with the client process and, unlike Suzuki, the step of synchronously disseminating less than all of the positions of the avatars not associated with a particular client process to each of the other client processes so that the particular client process can determine from the positions a set of avatars that are to be displayed. Claim 22 is thus patentable over Suzuki and the other references of record because they fail to teach or suggest such a method.

Amended Claim 23 is directed to a system for enabling a first user to interact with other users in a virtual space, wherein the first user and the other users each have an avatar associated therewith, and wherein the system comprises a first process associated with the first user, other client processes associated with the other users, and a server process in communication with the first client process and the other client processes.

Each of the other client processes is operable to monitor a position of the avatar associated with the other user and transmit the position of the avatar to the server process. The server process is operable to receive the positions of the avatars associated with the other users and, unlike Suzuki, transmit the positions of the avatars associated with less than all of the other users to the first client process. The first client process is operable to receive the positions of the avatars associated with less than all of the other users and determine from the received positions a set of the other users' avatars that are to be displayed. Claim 23 is thus patentable over Suzuki and the other references of record because they fail to teach or suggest such a system.

Amended Claim 25 is directed to a software program for enabling a first user to interact with other users in a virtual space, wherein the first user and the other users each have an avatar and a client process associated therewith, and wherein each client process is in communication with a server process. Unlike Suzuki, the software program includes instructions for causing the client process associated with the first user to perform the step of receiving a position of at less than all of the other users' avatars from the server process and determining, from the received

positions, a set of the other users' avatars that are to be displayed to the first user. Claim 25, and Claims 26, 28, 36, and 40 which depend therefrom, are thus patentable over Suzuki and the other references of record because they fail to teach or suggest such a software program.

Amended Claim 32 is directed to a software program for enabling a plurality of users to interact in a virtual space, wherein each user has a computer associated therewith, wherein each computer has a client process associated therewith, wherein each client process has an avatar associated therewith, and wherein each client process is in communication with a server process. The software program includes instructions for monitoring, by each client process, a position of the avatar associated with the client process and transmitting, by each client process to the server process, the position of the avatar associated with the client process. Unlike Suzuki, the instructions also are for transmitting, by the server process to each client process, the positions of less than all of the avatars that are not associated with the client process and determining from the positions transmitted in step (c), by each client process, a set of the avatars that are to be displayed. Claim 32, and Claims 33 and 38 which depend therefrom, are thus patentable over Suzuki and the other references of record because they fail to teach or suggest such a software program.

Amended Claim 35 is directed to a software program for operating a server to enable a plurality of users to interact in a virtual space, wherein each user has a computer associated therewith, wherein each computer has a client process associated therewith, wherein each client process has an avatar associated therewith, wherein the server has a process associated therewith, and wherein each client process is in communication with the server process. The software program comprises instructions for receiving, from each client process by the server process, data indicating a position of the avatar associated with the client process and, unlike Suzuki, synchronously disseminating the positions of less than all of the avatars not associated with a

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particular client process to each of the other client processes so that the particular client process can determine from the positions a set of avatars that are to be displayed.

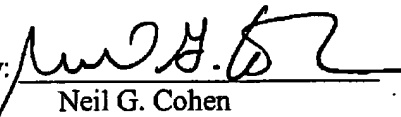
Claim 35, and Claim 39 which depends therefrom, are thus patentable over Suzuki and the other references of record because they fail to teach or suggest such a software program.

For the reasons set forth above, all of the pending claims are patentable over the references of record and are now in condition for allowance. An early allowance of the all claims is earnestly solicited.

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Respectfully submitted,

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